

Relates Struggle of Purchasing Area To Be Converted Into Park

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Wood Posey, former mayor of Terre Haute and one time president of the Indiana Association of Park Departments, told delegates at one of the departments' annual conventions several years ago of the struggle to secure a tract of ground to be converted into a state park.

This struggle finally was terminated, the land was purchased and the area named Turkey Run State Park. Mr. Posey also told of some land along Saranac creek near Terre Haute which would make an excellent state park, and invited the delegates to visit the area and see for themselves what had been accomplished toward making it into a beautiful park. Following is a part of Mr. Posey's address to the delegates:

I remember of getting the first state property and we didn't get it without a struggle. A commission was appointed by Governor Ralston and the first park was purchased in 1921. Mr. Luke was an old-timer who lived in the back woods. I don't think he had ever put an axe to his trees or ever cut a tree in his woods. It was just virgin timber and that property was to be sold under the hammer.

Mrs. Juliet Strauss, Rockville's "The Country Contributor," and editor of their county paper, was enthusiastic about the purchase of that property for a state park and was in Indianapolis about it. Governor Ralston appointed Colonel Richard Lieber and a half dozen others on a committee to work on the matter, but

that committee was a complete failure. It had no money to purchase the park and it seemed that nobody would work on it. Lieber was not willing to give up on a proposition of that kind and he asked Governor Ralston to dismiss that committee and let him appoint a committee of his own selection and stated that he wanted to acquire the park.

The park was appraised and could be purchased for two-thirds of its value, of \$21,000, and Lieber told the governor he would get the money to buy it. I was on his committee in Terre Haute, and he had members in Evansville and Fort Wayne and different places in the state to help him get the money. He didn't get the whole \$21,000, but he thought when he got two-thirds of the \$21,000, or 75 per cent of its appraised value, he could buy the property and there wasn't a man or woman on that committee that thought anybody else would try to buy that property but thought they would buy it for a state park and turn it over to the State of Indiana.

This is what happened. A lumber company—I think it was a lumber company here in Indianapolis—wanted to buy that property for the lumber they could get out of it. So it was sold at auction—put up at

auction. The money we had available to purchase it with was right at \$21,000, and Lieber on his own initiative ran the bidding up to \$31,200 before he quit, and then had to let this lumber company take it.

It was knocked down by the auctioneer to this lumber company. Everybody went home sick. We had visions of a wonderful state park at Turkey Run in Indiana. Lieber still wanted it. We all wanted it, but didn't know what to do about it. Richard Lieber went to the lumber company and asked how much profit they could make and asked for a proposition as to how much they would sell out for. They said they didn't want to sell at all, that they didn't know how much profit they could make, but they knew they could make a lot of money on that lumber. So after much discussion he asked them if he would raise \$10,000 profit for them and pay it to them if they would turn this property over to the committee for a state park.

They finally agreed to it and Lieber started his committee to work to get the additional \$10,000. Through his committee he did raise the additional amount and Turkey Run was turned over to Indiana as a state park. Every once in a while I see something in the paper about the tremendous attendance at all of these state parks and we know that our people are reaping the benefits of our efforts.

We have near Terre Haute a tract of land along Saranac creek which could be bought at a good price and which would be good park land. I had something to do with it, with having Lieber come to Terre Haute and see it. I said I didn't see a single thing in the way of making a park out of it, and Colonel Lieber said maybe we could do something with it. It was finally acquired by the state, 1,100 acres for park purposes. They went across Sullivan, Greene and Clinton counties. In addition 55 acres are water, which makes a park. There are 100,000 trees and it is going to be a beautiful park on account of the trees. We went down there a second time and had a meet-

ing at Jasonville, and I told the people, "We have something here that looks like a state park." I didn't know whether the people could see it or not, but it has gone as good or better than the other state parks. The first year the attendance was 36,000, which at 10 cents a person made it self-supporting.

That was the first year in its undeveloped state. That many people came the first year and it has been now many years and I don't know how many people come now but it will get better all the time. Those of you who haven't been to Saranac park, I want you to make the trip there. It isn't very far, on Highway 40 and I know you will enjoy seeing what was done there. It didn't look like it was possible to make a state park out of it, and I want you to see what has been done with it. It is a wonderful state park for Indiana.

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